CHAP. IX.

OF THE PERNICIOUS EFFECTS WHICH ARISE FROM THE UNNATURAL DISTINCTIONS ESTABLISHED IN SOCIETY.

From the reſpect paid to property flow, as from a poiſoned fountain, moſt of the evils and vices which render this world ſuch a dreary ſcene to the contemplative mind. For it is in the moſt poliſhed ſociety that noiſome reptiles and venomous ſerpents lurk under the rank herbage; and there is voluptuouſneſs pampered by the ſtill ſultry air, which relaxes every good diſpoſition before it ripens into virtue.

One claſs preſſes on another; for all are aiming to procure reſpect on account of their property: and property, once gained, will procure the reſpect due only to talents and virtue. Men neglect the duties incumbent on man, yet are treated like demi-gods; religion is alſo ſeparated from morality by a ceremonial veil, yet men wonder that the world is

is almoſt, literally ſpeaking, a den of ſharpers or oppreſſors.

There is a homely proverb, which ſpeaks a ſhrewd truth, that whoever the devil finds idle he will employ. And what but habitual idleneſs can hereditary wealth and titles produce? For man is ſo conſtituted that he can only attain a proper uſe of his faculties by exerciſing them, and will not exerciſe them unleſs neceſſity, of ſome kind, firſt ſet the wheels in motion. Virtue likewiſe can only be acquired by the diſcharge of relative duties; but the importance of theſe ſacred duties will ſcarcely be felt by the being who is cajoled out of his humanity by the flattery of ſycophants. There muſt be more equality eſtabliſhed in ſociety, or morality will never gain ground, and this virtuous equality will not reſt firmly even when founded on a rock, if one half of mankind are chained to its bottom by fate, for they will be continually undermining it through ignorance or pride.

It is vain to expect virtue from women till they are, in ſome degree, independent of men; nay, it is vain to expect that ſtrength of natural affection, which would make them good wives and mothers. Whilſt they are abſolutely dependent on their huſbands they